اللجنة الاسلامية الدولية لحقوق الانسان
International Islamic Commission on Human Rights
La Commission Islamique Internationale
pour les Droits de l'Homme

7 August 1992

Mr Richard Schrifter
Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights
Department of State
Washington DC 20520

Dear Mr Schrifter,

I write to you to urge you to use the weight and influence of the United States with the government of Tunisia in an attempt to alleviate the extremely grave situation many citizens of that country find themselves in.

Trials of some 300 political detainees opened in June and there is wide-spread and real concern that these procedures in no way conform to internationally accepted standards of justice. Long sentences are expected and even the death penalty. You will be aware of the protests made by human rights groups in the United States, including Middle East Watch, the International Human Rights Law Group and the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights, that civilians are being tried by military courts and that no medical examinations of the defendants, to assess whether they have been tortured to extract confessions, have been permitted.

The trials are the mere tip of an iceberg. Many thousands of political detainees, mostly arrested solely for alleged membership of opposition parties, are held illegally, incommunicado, without access to lawyers, family or medical attention, and torture is well documented. Amnesty International has over 200 testimonies of torture from former detainees, doctors and eye-witnesses. Police officers routinely falsify dates of arrest, tear up of ignore complaints and the people have no recourse to justice. The law is quite simply ignored.

United States' influence can do much to put pressure on countries guilty of such blatant violations of human rights and I urge you to examine the whole issue of Tunisia in an effort to ease the suffering of many innocent Tunisians.

With best wishes,
Yours sincerely,

Salem Azzam

Salem Azzam
Secretary General

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